
COMMENTARY

Where does the university of malta stand regarding gender trends in healthcare and education?

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ABSTRACT

Gender studies among healthcare students and academic personnel in healthcare courses are a contemporary and important topic. In the colleges of Health Sciences, Dental Surgery, and Medicine and Surgery at the University of Malta, this article examines the feminization of healthcare studies and the extent to which women in Malta hold significant roles in academia. The university website made the data available to the general public. The data reflecting each level of qualification as supplied by each faculty was examined

For trends in the gender and the top academic positions within each faculty were recorded. An increase in the proportion of female to male students enrolled in healthcare programmes is a widespread trend. The highest positions are still held by men in academics. To enable the delivery of the greatest service possible, efforts should be made to accommodate all races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic levels within the healthcare profession

Keywords: *Gender issues; Gender equality; Working women*

INTRODUCTION

One of the Sustainable Development Goals set forward by the UN is Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls." For the health systems to be properly managed, gender equity and inequities must be identified and addressed. This remark clarifies gender trends in academic fields and in health-related fields at the University of Malta. The only public university in Malta that accepts both domestic and foreign students. We examine the feminization of healthcare studies and the extent to which women hold influential positions in Malta's faculties of health sciences, dental surgery, and medicine and surgery. Therefore, gender studies in healthcare and academics at a global level are highly relevant to understanding the situation in Malta's sole state institution.

This commentary is a piece of observational writing that offers a fair summary of gender patterns in academics at the university level across the nation and may be compared to similar trends at other foreign universities. We discuss changes in healthcare education from 2009 to 2022 as well as the gender disparities that exist today across various levels of academic staff. Understanding gender patterns in higher education and their potential causes is crucial because it enables human resource planning and may encourage the creation of perks or policies that are appropriate for the demands of the workforce in both health academia and healthcare.

In order to apply our research to the larger international scientific community, our commentary tries to comprehend the gender patterns in Malta's university. In terms of gender equality and women's rights, this would enable a clearer understanding of how universities contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Student and staff data collection

All of the information utilized was obtained from the University of Malta website and was freely and publically available. The list of courses offered by the colleges of Health Sciences, Dental Surgery, and Doctor of Medicine and Surgery for each academic year, as well as the number of male and female students accepted each year, were included in the student data. Accessing each faculty's website and entering the gender of the dean, deputy dean, and heads of department into an Excel spreadsheet yielded information on the staff. These positions are at the very top of each faculty.

The data reflecting each level of qualification as supplied by each faculty was used to infer changes in the gender male: female ratio.

Gender Trends in Healthcare Students

In the Faculty of Dental Surgery, female enrollment grew over time relative to male enrollment at all educational levels. In contrast,

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women have consistently outnumbered men in diploma-level courses. In the Faculty of Health Sciences, female students predominately get diplomas and bachelor's degrees. However, it seems that men are more likely to enroll in post-graduate programmes like Masters and PhDs.

When examining healthcare positions and gender, occupational segregation on both a vertical and horizontal level is apparent. When it comes to management and decision-making positions, women tend to be underrepresented. Females in the healthcare field are typically concentrated in occupations that have to do with care, like nursing and midwifery. When compared to careers in medical, dentistry, and pharmacy, these jobs are sometimes thought of as having a "poor status. These high-status jobs are typically held by men. This observation is supported by the trends observed within the faculties of dental surgery and health sciences.

One of the largest programmes offered by the University of Malta in terms of enrollment is the Doctor of Medicine and Surgery programme within the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery. The trend that male supremacy persisted until 2013 is interesting. From that point forward, the ratio of men to women remained nearly equal, with the exception of the academic year 2021–2022, when there were more women than men. In contrast, the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery's post-graduate courses, including as Masters and PhD programmes, were predominately populated by women throughout all academic years.

The feminization of the medical curriculum in Malta is in line with global trends, as statistics reveal that over the past 20 years, more women than males have attended medical school. There is proof that the expanding worldwide feminist movement, in which women overcame discrimination and prejudice, has aided women in securing their place in the workforce. The University of Malta clearly demonstrates that during the past forty years, the participation of women in the medical profession has increased.

The feminization of women in healthcare professions is unmistakably obvious, according to census data from both Canada and the United States, which are consistent with Maltese findings. In Bangladesh in 2019, a higher proportion of female doctors than male doctors was also seen. Data on student admissions also revealed a female predominance. Female participation in medicine has been proven to have increased over the past ten years, despite the fact that there aren't many doctors who are women in Japan. This tendency is similar to that in Europe, especially Malta. Although there remains underrepresentation of women in Finland's top administrative positions, the proportion of women in medicine in Scandinavia has surpassed that of men. Although studies have shown that only a small number of women are found in prestigious specialties and academic medicine, Soviet history caused the medical profession in Russia to feminize earlier than in the West.

It is a well-known truth that medical teams perform better when there is more gender diversity in leadership posts. However, it seems that this is still not reflected in undergraduate enrollment decisions, particularly among students studying allied healthcare who will make up the incoming workforce. Therefore, progress in this direction should be accomplished on a global basis, which calls for international cooperation between the institutions concerned. By addressing issues like the gender pay gap, which sees women in the health industry earning 20% less than their male counterparts, we can encourage more women to enter the field and reduce attrition.

Despite an increase in the number of women working in medicine over the past ten years, they still hold the majority of lower-status and lower-paying positions when compared to men. To create a healthcare system that values and celebrates the contributions of the female sex, international cooperation is necessary.

Gender within Academia—A Snapshot

The offices of dean and deputy dean for these faculties are overwhelmingly held by men. In the Faculty of Health Sciences, there are significantly more female heads of departments than male heads of departments, however in the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, there are equally as many male and female heads of departments. In the Faculty of Dental Surgery, women make up the majority of department heads. The fields of medicine and surgery have historically been dominated by men, and more men tend to hold positions of authority. Nearly every department experiences this, but anesthesia and surgery departments more so than other departments. The problem of lack of opportunity keeping women from pursuing their education should be investigated globally. On a global level, women continue to be disproportionately underrepresented in positions as full professors and senior doctors. This is in line with the commentary's observations that, despite the fact that there are a lot of female department heads, males still dominate the more senior positions of dean and deputy dean. Due to discrimination against women, as well as other factors like having to shoulder more domestic work and having a greater demand for facilities and leave for caregivers, women work in academic healthcare professions inequitably. As a result, they typically find it challenging to keep up with their male coworkers. To address this problem, international cooperation is required in both strategy and reactions. These might consist of offering daycare, assuring fair and equitable pay, and improving the representation of women at all levels, but they most certainly do not stop there. These methods will provide women greater control over how they manage their lives and enable them to advance in their careers while juggling domestic responsibilities. These steps help to address issues caused by women's historical and social disadvantages, which prevented them from competing on an equal footing with men.

CONCLUSION

The provision of a high-quality service and productivity among all healthcare personnel depend on parity. Given that healthcare professionals care for a varied range of patients, having a staff that reflects that diversity would enable the greatest treatment to be provided. In order to deliver the best service possible through a workforce that is a reflection of the diverse patients it serves, Stanford, efforts should be made to accommodate all races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic levels.